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UNCLAS DJIBOUTI 001084

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: BOREL REVISITED: FRANCE GUARANTEES IMMUNITY FOR  
PRESIDENT GUELLEH

REF: DJIBOUTI 00585

1. (U) Summary: Questions on the involvement of President Ismael Omar Guelleh in the death of French Judge Bernard Borel resurfaced due to Guelleh's upcoming visit to France. Lawyers in the case, reopened in France at the request of Borel's widow, are said to have expressed a desire to question Guelleh while he is in country. French authorities have issued statements saying Guelleh will not be questioned based on standard international law regarding diplomatic immunity for Heads of States.

2. (U) Issues surrounding the accusations of President Ismael Omar Guelleh's involvement in the alleged murder of French Judge Bernard Borel in 1995 arose once again due to President Guelleh's upcoming trip to France to commemorate the 60th anniversary of Allied landings in Provence in World War II. An investigation is open in France regarding the Judge's death at the request of his widow.

3. (U) Lawyers involved in this investigation are said to want Guelleh to be questioned while in France. The French Foreign Ministry has issued statements to French and International press agencies asserting the diplomatic immunity for President Guelleh during the August 14 - 16th, commenting that "it is a fundamental principle of international law."

4. (U) The 11 August issue of La Nation, Djibouti's national paper, ran the statement of French Ambassador to Djibouti, Philippe Selz, regarding this matter. Selz's statement reinforced the idea of not commenting on investigations that are underway and emphasized that documents declassified in April 2004 did not indicate, nor imply, the involvement of the Djiboutian Head of State. Selz commented that the Djiboutian authorities and Department of Justice have given the French investigators complete cooperation in this matter. Selz ended his statement with a rebuttal aimed at comments heard on a French radio station that France will be embarrassed to have invited President Guelleh saying, "France will be honored by the presence of President Guelleh at the 15th of August ceremonies."

GRIBBIN